

Packs don't help when left at home



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Let me start out with a couple missions from just last year. First involved a lady who decided to go for a short hike on the Plateau, one fine Sunday afternoon. Since it was warm out, and she wasn't going to hike far, she elected not to bring a pack, extra coat, food, or water. Bad idea.

A storm front bringing a foot of fresh snow came in like a runaway train. Our hiker became hopelessly lost with only a near dead cell phone. Near dark, with luck on her shoulder, she found a cabin to seek shelter, and just enough cell service to get a text to 911. She was found by the posse and lives to tell the tale.

Our send tale involves a male hunter near the Black Canyon. A warm afternoon and he decided to leave his pack and extra jacket in the jeep, as he was only going to hunt a short way up the trail. Again, a bad idea.

The poor man became hopelessly lost, and as night came down, terribly cold. His partner knew he was overdue and called for help. The posse responded in a huge way, having crews searching all afternoon and night, with more crews and aircraft over the next two days.

The hunter had wandered off into a very remote and treacherous area of the canyon, where he was finally found. He paid the full price, plus tax, for not having pack and warm clothes, probably expiring the very first night from exposure.

These two cases make the odds 50/50 for survival or perish. That pack can not only save your life, but it can also make an unplanned overnight stay a little bit more tolerable.

Every year, I write an article about carrying a survival pack and provide a starter list to get



All that survival stuff does no good if it is sitting on the seat of the truck. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

folks thinking about what to bring. I cannot stress enough the importance of having a pack like this with you, together with the knowledge to care for yourself while in the woods. Generally, I submit this column to coincide with the beginning of the big game hunting seasons here in Colorado.

Begin with making a small survival pack. Keep it small and lightweight so you can carry it with you all the time. It will not help you if it is sitting in the truck. Probably 90 percent of the missions that search and rescue conducts are for folks who have no survival kit with them. Being unprepared turns a minor inconvenience into a life-threatening four-alarm emergency.

Here is a start:
Compass, maps, and GPS with extra batteries.

Signal mirror and whistle, sound making device to help searchers locate you.

Knife and Multi-tool.

Flashlight with extra batteries — I prefer lithium as they hold power better in the cold than alkaline, don't leak, and last longer. I also carry a small headlamp for walking and using for tasks.

Fire starter-waterproof matches, metal match and flares; carry at least two types and some tinder for wet conditions. I use the product called Wet Fire.

Drinking water — a hydration

bladder or camelback works well.

Life Straw — this is a small, personal water filtration device. You can safely drink from a puddle with one of these.

Food-high energy foods, power bars, nuts, trail mix, jerky.

Cell phone and extra power source. These extra battery chargers can be had for around ten bucks, are very small and weigh mere ounces.

Rain Gear or poncho because Colorado weather changes by the minute.

Space blanket bivy — much better than a blanket as you can crawl into a bivy to stay warm, like a sleeping bag.

Duct tape — good for just about anything from first aid to repairs.

Toilet paper — you just never know about how old those snacks were.

My personal first aid kit contains the basic life-saving items. A tourniquet, Israeli Compression Bandage, Celox Gauze, and a couple band-aids, are the major items.

The kit carries just the basics to save a life. All the other things I can deal with back at camp. Again, if the kit becomes too expansive, you will not lug it with you, and it does no good sitting at home when you are in the woods.

Keep your cell phone off during the day. The phone will

use up its battery while constantly searching for service. Turn it on when needed and carry an extra power supply.

If you do need help, make certain you contact 911 with your phone. Many people make the mistake of calling someone back home and having them make the call. When you make the call, 911 personnel will get a GPS ping on your location that will save many hours for search and rescue folks in finding you.

If you have no service, try moving around to higher locations. If all else fails, send 911 a text. Sometimes a text will go through when a call will not. Remember the motto: call when you can and text when you can't. The good folks at the 911 centers can receive texts and reply to the text conversation.

Have a responsible contact person back home. This person should have names, descriptions, vehicle, and personal information of everyone on the hunt.

Make certain this contact person knows your itinerary and where your camp is. Notify them of any changes and have set check in times. Instruct them to call the Sheriff's Office if you are overdue. Information they provide to search and rescue folks will save countless hours searching for you.

Again, make sure this is a responsible person. Choose

someone who will be available 24/7 for the entire duration of your hunt to receive updates from you. Schedule a call-in time with this person for routine check-ins. For the several hunts I take each year, my wife is my call-in partner. She knows my trip itinerary for every step of the trip.

For those of you who carry a GPS, turn it on and use it whenever you are away from your vehicle or camp. Before you start out, take a GPS coordinate of your starting point. We once had a man who brought a GPS but did not turn it on until he was lost. He was able to give us his exact location but had no idea where his truck was parked. We found him quickly and it was a happy ending.

At your starting point of your hunt each day, leave a note. This note, which is sometimes referred to as a "backpacker note" can be left on the windshield of your vehicle, tied to the tent, or taped to your ATV. Just state which direction you went off on foot and the area you plan on hunting in. This gives search and rescue a great start on finding you, again, saving time that could be lifesaving.

One thing for certain here in Colorado; the weather is going to change. I have seen temperatures drop 40 degrees in 30 minutes and sunny skies turn to raging blizzards. Carry some extra clothes along. It might be a balmy 50 degrees in the morning. A front can push through, bringing rain changing to snow, all by afternoon. Prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Remember, we want to find you safe and sound, and not as a recovery. Bring some survival gear with you, always. No excuses.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

Prescribed fires planned on Carpenter Ridge and West Dolores Rim

SPECIAL TO THE MDP

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plans to conduct prescribed fire treatments this fall in the Tres Rios and Uncompahgre field offices. Firefighters will reintroduce fire to a fire-adapted ecosystem in a controlled manner to protect Ponderosa pine stands, enhance wildlife habitat, restore healthy forests and species diversity, and maintain a fire-resilient landscape.

The Carpenter Ridge project

area is located two miles outside of Paradox Valley, CO, between Q13 and R3 roads (Rim Rocker Trail route). Firefighters plan to burn 200 acres of oak brush and pine tree litter.

"The Carpenter Ridge treatment will help break down forest litter and add nutrients back into the soil so that native plants can flourish and benefit wildlife," said Fire Management Specialist Cameron Shaughnessy.

The West Dolores Rim project area, locally known as the "East and North Pines," is located

seven miles east of Dove Creek. Firefighters will use hand ignitions and Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) on 1,200 acres of pine needle cast and mountain brush leaf litter.

"Reintroducing low intensity fire on West Dolores Rim will clear brush and needle cast that can prevent new plant growth, as well as decrease the likelihood of a large severe wildfire," said acting Fire Management Specialist Tyler Corbin.

Prescribed fire mimics natural processes under appropriate

weather and vegetative conditions, which improves forage for wildlife, increases plant diversity by creating breaks in the understory where native grasses and forbs can thrive, and effectively reduces hazardous vegetation while enhancing woodland health.

The projects are part of the BLM's ongoing commitment to protect human health and safety while maintaining or enhancing forest and woodland health and functionality.

The BLM obtained smoke permits from the Colorado State

Air Pollution Control Division, which identify atmospheric conditions under which the burns can be implemented. Prescribed fire smoke may affect your health. For more information, visit CO Dept of Public Health & Environment — Wood smoke and health.

More information on Southwest District prescribed fuel treatments at inciweb.wildfire.gov — Southwest District and follow their Facebook — BLM Southwest District or Twitter — @SWD_Fire pages.



10 SOUTH SELIG AVE

MONTROSE, COLORADO 81401

970-249-4226